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Controversial Ex-Judge to Aid In Battle for New Ray Trial

Special to The Press-Scimitar

Saying he's seen evidence he believes could free James Earl Ray, former Court of Criminal Appeals Judge Charles Galbreath says he will join attorney Mark Lane in trying to win a new trial for the convicted killer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Galbreath, who gained national fame earlier this year during an unsuccessful effort to oust him, said he decided to join Lane after the two men met Friday afternoon in Nashville.

"He showed me some evidence that has convinced me that James Earl Ray did not kill Dr. King, that it was a very involved conspiracy orchestrated by a group, I'll say, with all the facilities they needed," Galbreath said.

Galbreath, who declined to discuss specifics about the evidence, said a suit will be filed within the next 10 days in Memphis, where King was gunned down as he stood on a downtown motel balcony on April 4, 1968.

He said Lane wanted him as an associate because of his experience as a judge in various levels of the state's criminal court system.

Ray, 50, pleaded guilty to slaying King in exchange for a 99-year prison term instead of the death penalty. He is serving time at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary in Petros where on Oct. 13 he was married to Knoxville artist Anna Sandhu.

Performing that ceremony was the Rev. James M. Lawson Jr., a close friend of King. Lawson, former pastor of Centenary United Methodist Church, last night defended his decision to perform the marriage. He spoke to about 75 persons last night at Memphis Area Project South Citizen's Association annual meeting.

Lawson

Galbreath

Map-South Inc. is a non-profit organization formed in 1964 to help impoverished persons in South Memphis. It sponsors free health clinics, senior citizen and employment programs, alcoholism and drug counseling, and other social services.

"I asked what Jesus would do and I knew what he would have done," he told the group. If Martin Luther King could have returned he would have performed the marriage, he added with fervor. "I know absolutely that Martin Luther King would have come back to do it."

Lawson now is pastor of Holman United Methodist Church in Los Angeles.

The negative reaction to his role in the marriage distressed him, Lawson said, because it signals a prevailing spirit of ugliness in the country.

"This nation needs to think about the fact that we are becoming mean in spirit and temperament. And I find even in the black community this meanness instead of compassion, care and encouragement."

He also offered his moral support to the striking city school teachers. "You're not striking because you're not concerned about the children. You are striking because the leaders refuse to treat even teachers as human beings with dignity."